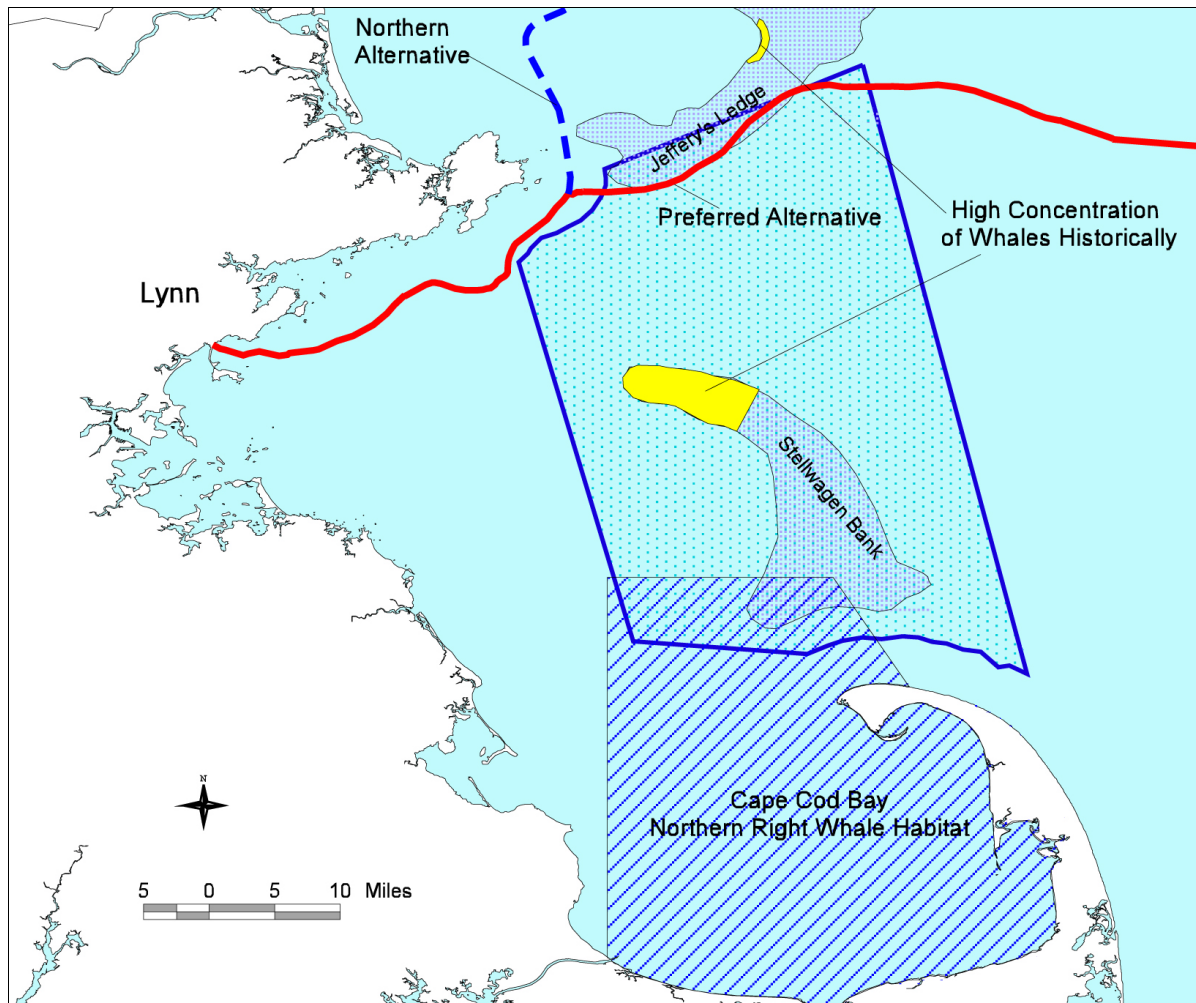


Figure 3-4: Massachusetts Bay Whale-Watching Locations (USGS 2000)

Recreational Fishing

Before the mid-1970s, most recreational fishing was conducted in the nearshore waters inside the three-mile limit (U.S. territorial waters). After that time, groundfish declined in the nearshore area, and the market for bluefin tuna opened in Japan. Those two factors influenced an increase in the amount of recreational fishing taking place on Stellwagen Bank (NOAA 1993, cited in Earth Tech 1999).

Recreational fishing activities, including sport fishing, on Stellwagen Bank can be best described by the type of fishing vessels used. Those vessels include party boats, charter boats, and private rental boats. Targeted sport fishing species and their seasons include baitfish and sport fish (late May to September), groundfish (March to June), and tuna (June to early November). Recreational and tourism activity in the Stellwagen Bank area also includes operations of privately owned boats used for fishing or whale-watching and bird watching (Pett and McKay 1990; NOAA 1993, cited in Earth Tech 1999). Data from 1987 through 1989 on recreational fishing beyond the three-mile limit indicate that the following species are those most commonly caught (NOAA 1993, cited in Earth Tech 1999):